

VANETTE OTT BUNYAN

The Cat Cemetery and the

Man Who Brought Chopped Meat for the Chickens

As told to Maxine Durney, February 1, 1994, Santa Rosa, California.

Vanette's great-grandfather and grandmother came from Michigan to Bloomfield. They were John and Emmaline Short Smith, born in 1833 and 1834. John was a tinsmith. They made the trip in a covered wagon caravan with their son, Delos, who was a musician.

They moved to Petaluma, where John purchased several hacks (horse drawn carriages) which he and Delos ran as taxis, meeting the trains.

Delos married Indiana Overholser. She had come to Petaluma from Indiana with her first husband. On his death she went back to Indiana, then made a second trip to California, bringing her parents with her. Delos and Indiana's children were Ada, who died as a child, and Zada, who was Vanette's mother. Delos died very young in a flu epidemic in 1890.

Zada (born in 1883) went through high school in Petaluma, then studied one year at the University of California in Berkeley. By the time the earthquake hit, in April 1906, she was in Petaluma, married, and had a baby. She told of going out to hold a pan of milk, so it wouldn't spill. The baby needed it.

Her husband was Leon Jewett Ott. His parents were Abraham Ott and Maria Jewett. The Jewetts were Dutch. Abraham and Maria came from Michigan to Corning, California, soon after the Civil War. Abraham, a carpenter, was in poor health; it was said "he had taken a bullet in his throat" in the Civil War. Abraham died in 1888, leaving his wife Maria with three boys to raise. She took in laundry and worked as a practical nurse to support them. The sons were Leon, Raymond, and George Ott.

Leon graduated from eighth grade only. When he was thirteen, he was apprenticed to a telegrapher in the telegraph office at the Southern Pacific station in Corning. He was later on the Sacramento to Sparks run. He had wonderful experiences as a young man, exciting runs on the line, as well as hunting and fishing. All this lent to storytelling when he had children of his own.

He left Southern Pacific when the Union was organized: he was on the wrong side.

Leon Ott and his brother Ray opened a tannery in Petaluma. The business was successful, but the building burned on the day of the Earthquake, and they were unable to reorganize. Insurance companies were broke. Eventually, they were able to get a loan to rebuild the tannery.

Leon and Zada's first child was Ward, for whom Zada held the milk from spilling. When Ward was six, he fell from a tree, fractured his skull, and died.

Their other children were Wilma, born in 1908; Vanette, born in 1914; and Margaret, born in 1916.

When Margaret was an infant, Leon, suffering from stomach ulcers, was advised by his doctor to "go out in the country." He purchased the Zeh ranch, ten acres on Gossage Avenue, off Magnolia Avenue. From here he rode his bicycle into work at the tannery each day.

When the ranch was at full force as a poultry ranch, he ran about ten thousand chickens, in ten chicken houses.

Vanette: "Many of the poultry farmers had come to Petaluma with no knowledge of how to raise chickens. The University of California Farm Advisor was Frank Mugglestone, who had an office in Petaluma. The information he brought was very important to my father and other poultrymen."

"My father was a very strong supporter of the Poultry Producers when it started."

"On the ranch we had a horse, a pig, a cow, and twenty cats."

"Cats were important, especially a good rat catching cat, but cats also helped to keep down the mice and gophers. The sandy clayey soil of the garden and chicken pens was riddled with gopher runs. Cats abounded. When distemper struck, my friends and I held funerals for the cats, burying them in cemeteries of our own devising, and suiting the cat's religion. Like Cypress Hill in Petaluma, there was a burial place for Catholic cats, Protestant cats, and Jewish cats."

"There was a man who came, every afternoon, from his plant in the Liberty District, with chopped meat for my father to give to our chickens. The meat was in a square can, with the lid cut out. It was horse meat. We were afraid of him and hated him, and ran away when he came."

"He was the one who came for our old horse when it could no longer get up from the ground."

Vanette's father was a trustee at Cinnabar School. Her parents were members of Oddfellows and Rebekahs.

"My mother was a Methodist, but my father was not a churchman. I joined the Congregational Church: that's where all the young people were, and it is there that I was married. Dr. Breed was the minister. He was an intellectual, and had a terrific influence on the young people there."

Vanette attended Cinnabar School, then graduated from high school in 1931. She attended Santa Rosa Junior College, taking courses in botany from Milo Baker, and graduating in 1933. She enrolled at University of California in Berkeley, in English. "We were assigned 'big sisters'. Mine talked to me about my major, and persuaded me to become a full botany major."

"After U.C., I taught elementary school in Berkeley, for two years. I wanted to teach biology, but I was told that if I taught a science I must also teach football!"

"I married Nathan (Nathaniel) Bunyan of Santa Rosa, who was a contractor. He served his time in the Navy during the

War and I taught two years at Santa Rosa Junior High."

Vanette's father's brothers were Raymond and George. Raymond Ott married Mamie Preshaw, stayed in the tannery business and eventually worked in the business in Santa Rosa for Abe Levine.

George Ott married Margaret Veale. Her father was a merchant, and staked George in the stationery business in Petaluma.

"We worked there when we were kids, twenty-five cents an hour. He had two sections of books, in one the equivalent of the cheap paperback; in the other the classics, all of which I read. I was good at book sales from this section."

Vanette's sisters were Wilma and Margaret. Wilma graduated from San Jose State Norma School, and taught at Waugh School, then later in Santa Rosa. She was a teacher for forty-four years. She married "Dutch" Melvin Flohr, who became chief of police in Santa Rosa. They had three boys.

Margaret went to the Junior College; married Jack Schneider, who was born and raised in Cazadero. He was a chemist, and eventually a nurseryman in Lafayette. They had two boys and two girls.

GAYE LeBARON'S NOTEBOOK



Veteran botanists volunteer at SSU

Don't sing me sad songs about growing old. I know of too many people who make it seem like just the thing to do these days.

Among them are the six elders, each one a botanist with exceptional credentials, who have donated their Wednesdays for the past three years to the establishment and upkeep of the North Coast Herbarium at Sonoma State University.

The faculty's curator, Dr. Charles Quibell, has been fortunate to have the services of such natural scientists as Dr. Keith Wagon, retired chief plant pathologist for the state, who lives at Spring Lake Village; Dr. Reid Moran, retired director of the herbarium at the San Diego Museum, who lives in Hessel; Walter Knight, former director of the botanical gardens at East Bay Regional Parks, and his wife, Irja, who live in Petaluma; James Vale, a retired physicist at the Livermore lab; and Vanette Bunyan, a Santa Rosa botanist and active member of the Native Plant Society.

Two of the six — Bunyan and Wagon — studied with Milo Baker, the late Kenwood botanist and teacher whose collection forms the basis of the SSU herbarium. The 13,000 specimens collected by Baker and his students were housed at SRJC, where he was a faculty member, until after his death. At SSU, with such good "help," curator Quibell has been able to make the collection available to upper-division and graduate students and to increase the number of specimens.

Two of the volunteers, Knight and Reid, have done research in the collection and are preparing manuscripts for publication.

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PETALUMA HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Oral History Program

Narrator Personal Information Questionnaire

Name Bunyan Vanette Ott
Last First Middle (Maiden)

Address 1125 Hyland Drive
Santa Rosa, CA.

Marital status: Married ☐ Single ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed ☒

Birthdate 5/13/1914 Birthplace Petaluma, CA.

Length of residence in Petaluma (or Sonoma County) 79 years except for education time and W.W.II.

Education: Elementary school Cinnabar

Secondary school Petaluma High School Grad 1931

College Santa Rosa Junior College Grad 1933

Other Univ. of California Grad 1935

" " " Teaching credential 1936

Occupation(s) or former occupations(s) _____

Teacher: John Muir School 6th grade Berkeley, CA. 1936-1938

" Santa Rosa Junior High Sch. 1942-1944

Registrar's office Santa Rosa Junior College - 1953-1972

Travels around U.S. with Navy husband; Hawaii and

Alaska.

Organizations, clubs Saturday Afternoon Club, Santa Rosa

California Native Plant Society Milo Baker Chapter.

Other special interests Botany major in college; interest
in native plants. Volunteer at the Sonoma State
College Herbarium.

Additional comments _____

THANK YOU!

PETALUMA HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
Oral History Program
Family History Questionnaire

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Deceased? Date</u>
<u>Parents*</u>	<u>Leong. Ott</u>	<u>1874</u>	<u>Michigan</u>	<u>1958</u>
	<u>Zada E Smith</u>	<u>1883</u>	<u>Petaluma</u>	<u>1962</u>

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Deceased? Date</u>
<u>Brothers & Sisters</u>	<u>Wilma Ott Flohr</u>	<u>b 1908</u>	<u>Petaluma</u>	
	<u>Margaret Ott Schneider</u>	<u>b 1916</u>	<u>Petaluma</u>	
	<u>Ward Ferris Ott</u>	<u>1906</u>	<u>Petaluma</u>	<u>1912</u>

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Deceased? Date</u>
<u>Grand-parents*</u>	<u>Emeline Short Smith</u>	<u>1834</u>		<u>1918</u>
<u>at-grand parents</u>	<u>John T. Smith</u>	<u>1833</u>		<u>1917</u>
<u>terral</u>	<u>Delos L. Smith</u>	<u>1854</u>	<u>"</u>	<u>1890</u>
	<u>Indiana (India) Overholser</u>		<u>Indiana</u>	<u>1948</u>

*See over 2nd marriage: Fuller

Spouse Nathaniel Robert Bungan, deceased 1986

Children Ward Bungan, born 1946, adopted at 5wks old. Lives in Santa Rosa, works for P.G. & E.

Grandchildren Gloria Jean Bungan, b. 1962, Hayward, CA.

Susan Marie Bungan, b. 1969, Hayward, CA.

Jason Bungan, b. 1972, Hayward, CA.

Manuel Ruiz Bungan, USMC, b. 1972 - adopted 1974

Anthony Bungan, b. 1976, Hayward, CA.

Laura Bungan, b. 1980, San Francisco, CA.

*Please include maiden name of mother and grandmothers.

THANK YOU!

paternal
* grandparents:

Abraham Orr - b. ? Birthdate Birthplace Deceased
Michigan - 1888

Maria Jewett Orr b. ? Michigan - 1922
2nd marriage Foster